



Community Update Remarks from City of Durham Mayor William V. "Bill" Bell Thursday, July 26, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. – Holton Career & Resource Center

I first want to thank you for taking the time to be in attendance with us this evening. I'd like to also thank and introduce the members of the Violent Crime Reduction Roundtable panel who are with us this evening. Most of them will be making comments, at various points, later in the program. Likewise, the meeting will also allow time for comments/questions from members of the public.

Many of you may know that we convened this panel in January 2012, after seeing a three percent increase in violent crime in 2011 (according to third quarter 2011 numbers). That was the beginning of a disturbing trend that, in my opinion, we, as a community, should not and could not accept. I said at the time that we must renew our efforts and our commitment to reduce gun violence that kills our children, that destroys our families, reduces our quality of life and negatively impacts our economy.

The purpose of this evening's meeting is to report back to the public, the actions and results of the "Violent Crime Reduction Roundtable" since our convening in January of this year.

I would hasten to add that Durham is not unique in having the challenges of dealing with violent crime. The recent horrendous events in Aurora, Colorado shows us that none of our communities are safe from violent and senseless crimes and we never know when it may strike or at what levels.

Permit me to begin the discussion by focusing on the subject of ***"violent crimes committed with guns"***. We know that any crime could potentially lead to bodily harm, but those crimes committed with guns have a particularly larger chance of doing bodily harm. Too many times, persons who committed violent crimes with guns were too easily back on the streets, with low bail bonds, to again commit violent crimes with guns. That is why a part of our strategy was to focus on those individuals who are illegally misusing firearms in **a criminal and violent way.**

We debated the question of what should be the amount of the bail bond for persons accused of committing crimes with a gun, when they have their first appearance at the magistrate's office. Chief Magistrate Donald Paschall was very involved in our discussions, providing us with bail bond data and the hearing process.

We revisited our bail bonding guidelines – looking at whether we should increase the amount of bail bonds for gun offenses **to include first-time offenders.** I specifically recommended that our present bail bonds for crimes committed in Durham be increased to \$300,000. We had, what I would call, a healthy discussion on this issue, among law enforcement, among our judiciary (thanks to an effort led by Chief District Court judge Marcia Morey), among the public, and among members of our local delegation to the General Assembly.

As part of the discussion, Representative H. M. “Mickey” Michaux and our City Attorney Patrick Baker, pointed out the pros and cons of that recommendation, and in the end, Representative Michaux committed to introducing legislation in the 2013 General Assembly to amend an existing statewide General Statute (**GS 15A-533 Right to pretrial release to capital and noncapital cases**) that would, in effect, accomplish much of the bail bond solutions that we are seeking with respect to violent crimes committed with guns.

NORTHEAST CENTRAL DURHAM

The Police and Sheriff’s Department placed more emphasis in those areas of the city where there was a higher concentrated level of violent crime and the use of guns, such as in **Northeast Central Durham, the Bulls Eye area, and the East Durham Children’s Initiative area**, compared to other parts of the city.

I want to emphasize now, as I did in January, that this was not an effort to brand these areas as unsafe, but to acknowledge that based on statistics, it is was an area that was in need of more attention in our attempt to reduce the level of gun violence that has occurred in the past. We benchmarked these areas with regard to the level of crime that was occurring prior to our initiative, and the level of crime incidents was reported at each of our roundtable meetings.

The Police Department, along with the Sheriff’s Office, enhanced its focus on the top violent crime offenders in each district. Some of those individuals took heed and some did not. I’ll leave it to Chief Lopez to tell you more about the status of those individuals that were brought into Police Headquarters.

At this time, I am now going to ask Chief Lopez and Sheriff Andrews to comment on their actions and results in these action areas, to include the crime statistics.

After they have finished, I’d like to ask the District Attorney and Chief District Court Judge Morey to speak on their efforts in improving better communication and coordination between the District Attorney’s Office, judges and law enforcement. To date, there have been:

- More regular meetings between law enforcement and the DAs Office using a Team approach.
- The DA’s office has assigned a staff person to track individuals, who committed crimes using guns, and shares that information with law enforcement officials and the courts in a more coordinated and timely fashion.
- Judge Morey has assigned a magistrate to the Police Department, Monday through Friday, to speed up the issuance of warrants for violent crime arrests.

An ongoing effort has been for stronger **Community Engagement Efforts** in the Northeast Central Durham area. There has been more targeted work through the East Durham Children’s Initiative to involve parents, to engage homeowners, NECD leadership, Council members and PAC 1. This public meeting is a part of that effort. However, since members of those communities are present, I want to make sure that they have an opportunity to comment and respond to questions on their efforts in this area.

Introduce Veronica and Clarence Marshall of the EDCI neighborhood.

Finally, let me conclude before going into Q&A, by again saying that the reduction of crime in our city is one of the highest priorities for me as mayor.

I also recognize that there are more factors than just law enforcement that impact the reduction of crime. Factors such as jobs, poverty, education, drug addiction, and the health of individuals both their physical and/or their mental health. It requires and depends heavily on the cooperation of the residents of our communities as well as trust in our law enforcement agencies.

I would hope that as we go forward as a community, we will find ways to address those other factors while building on the successes that we have accomplished.

Thank you and now let me open the meeting up for questions.

In closing, let me end on a positive note. As I said in January, I still strongly believe that **GREAT** things are happening in our community and we are not going to let that light be dimmed or the great things that have occurred and will occur, be diminished by crimes committed by a few in this city and county or outsiders who come into our community to do crime.

Thank you for taking the time to come and also for sharing your thoughts and lets continue to work together to make Durham great.